

## The Gifted Garage Sale

According to our government, the latest recession is finally over. Still, it seems to me that lots of states are wrangling with diminished budgets for schools in general and gifted programs in particular. So, if we are to maintain our own livelihoods and our field's existence, we're going to have to become innovative in our approaches to fundraising.

As a way to gain some much-needed cash, I thought that we could hold a gifted garage sale, ridding ourselves of some cumbersome things and ideas that we haven't used in quite some time. Flush with the new money this sale would raise, we could begin rebuilding our base of operation that takes into account the changing focus of our field.

So . . . let's see what we can afford to do without.

One item I *know* we can sell off is all those extra desks that gifted kids used to sit in when we had resource room programs. Remember resource rooms? Gifted kids would get together for one day a week—even more in some school districts—and they would engage in all manner of activities that focused on the specific cognitive and affective needs they had that their classroom counterparts did not. The desks might look a bit frayed, filled as they are with sarcastic graffiti and stained with a few tears that were the result of intense discussions on the high points and hassles of being smart. Still, after a good scrubbing, any trace that a gifted kid once used this desk would be expunged. Good as new, some of these desks could be shuffled into regular classrooms, where gifted kids now sit all day, every day, having their needs met along with everyone else's. With the excess desks sold, I suggest we buy multiple copies of any ASCD or NAGC publication that has the word *differentiation* in its title and distribute these books to the classroom

teachers now fully responsible for meeting the needs of gifted students. We better do this quickly, though, as the next educational panacea to come along might make these differentiation manuals hard to find in just a few more years.

Another bunch of stuff to tag for quick sale would be all of those old gifted education textbooks that have been collecting dust on our shelves for the past two decades. We couldn't price them very high, for who would want to read books that did not contain the latest in jargon, like the PCM (Parallel Curriculum Model), or the benefits of "cluster grouping," or the life-changing impact of the SEM (Schoolwide Enrichment Model)? With all of these new-fangled ideas and innovations, it's hard to imagine that *anyone* would want to read Virgil Ward's *Differential Education for the Gifted* (way too complex!), or T. Ernest Newland's *The Gifted in Socio-Educational Perspective* (since we don't test for social or emotional development in kids, how important can it be?), or the American Association for Gifted Children's *On Being Gifted* (since when did gifted teenagers think they could write their own book telling us what their needs are?). Also, think of the shelf space we would save if we simply got rid of Lewis Terman's five-volume series, *Genetic Studies of Genius*? After all, we *all* know how politically incorrect it is to state that some children may actually have the genetic

predisposition to be gifted, so the sooner we relegate Terman to the “two-for-one” table, the better off we’ll be. And, with all the extra shelf space, we now have a place to store those differentiation books we just purchased for all of our teachers!

Looking in another direction to find a new source of revenue, a whole bunch of money could be raised if we sold off those identification tools we once used to determine which children were gifted and which ones weren’t. After all, enlightened minds now know that the once-maligned mantra of gifted child education’s foes—“All children are gifted in some way”—has become the byword of many of today’s gifted “experts.” With multiple talents and multiple intelligences eliminating the need to examine children’s IQs and gifted students being assigned to any ol’ class in order to make it “fair” that every teacher gets at least a few smart kids, who cares about individual levels of giftedness? What’s wrong with placing a kid with an IQ of 130 in the same type of program as a kid with an IQ of 165? Hey, they’re both smart kids, right? How could their individual needs be *that much* different? Actually, our colleagues in special education may even follow our lead and sell off their own identification tools, since inclusion places kids with IQs of 60 and IQs of 80 into the same classroom anyway. If it’s right for them, how could it be wrong for us? As an added bonus, think of all the time we’ll save—and “time *is* money!”—in explaining to parents who want to know why their gifted child is not enrolled in a special program that their child is, indeed, being served appropriately. A quick “But, your gifted son *is* being served . . . in the regular classroom!” can become the “one-size-fits-all” response we’ve been seeking all these long years!

A final collection of unneeded materials to sell to the highest bidder would be any and all books, journals, curricular

materials, and videotapes about how to deal with that perennial pest, the underachieving gifted student. These so-called “underachievers” have been around almost since our field’s founding (and throughout human history, perhaps), and we still haven’t provided extensive and effective programs to address their concerns about school being boring or passionless. So, why continue wasting our time and energies trying to engage students who have so little regard for their own intellects that they won’t even use them to get good grades? If putting these kids on contracts doesn’t work, or if taking away their extracurriculars doesn’t result in a turnaround, what’s the point in spending valuable time and resources on them? Let’s sell off any material that has the word *underachievement* in its title and spend the money on students who play the game of school just like they’re supposed to do. It’s a tough world, and if these underachieving crybabies want to succeed in it, they better learn to put their caustic comments aside, get off their intellectual duffs, and strive to do what we all know they can: “reach their fullest potential.” With the money we save, we may need to purchase a few extra cubicles for the in-school suspension room, as there may be an uptick in student enrollment there, at least until those underachievers either smarten up or drop out.

There you have it. An easy way to get the field of gifted child education out of the fiscal quagmire in which it currently exists. With a little luck and not a whole lot of energy, we might even reach the pinnacle of success and become so homogenized with the regular education program that no one will even know we’re there. Of course, that would probably upset people like Virgil Ward, T. Ernest Newland, and Lewis Terman, but since they are all deceased and we’ve already sold off their books, I doubt anyone will take much notice. **GCT**



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